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1 May 1973

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Anti-US Propaganda in Yugoslavia

SUMMARY

Over the past six months, Yugoslav propaganda media have taken an increasingly anti-US line, and Belgrade has undertaken several diplomatic initiatives detrimental to good relations. The motivation for these moves lies outside the realm of bilateral relations--which have improved significantly over the past few years--but the policy imperatives behind them are nonetheless real. Yugoslavia is purposely seeking to give its foreign policy a more "revolutionary" cast calculated to increase its prestige among its nonaligned allies and its Warsaw Pact neighbors. Tito wants to swing the pendulum away from his westward orientation of the past few years, and criticism of the US appears to carry the least penalties in achieving this goal.

Tito does not, however, wish a total freeze in formal relations with the US. Loss of high level sympathy in Washington for Yugoslavia's plight would be a crushing blow to the regime and would have serious implications for stability in the succession period.

Last fall, Tito made several public statements about the harmful aspects of visits to the US by party leaders and university professors. The thrust of these statements was to warn Yugoslavs against ideological contamination by the leader of the capitalist world. The vigilance theme was picked up by the press, which ran several long articles on subversive American propaganda tactics--specifically mentioning US psy-war acts in Vietnam. Toward the end of the year, Yugoslav newspapers developed an increasingly harsh tone in rebutting Western press speculation about Tito's internal problems and his alleged drift toward Moscow

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in foreign policy. In early 1973, the press turned on the US with a vengeance, alleging improprieties in the actions of Embassy personnel who questioned nominees for a youth exchange program, and widely publishing false charges that USIA was being used by hostile emigres in the US.

The internal press campaign was designed to divert popular attention from the regime's problems by raising the specter of inimical foreign activities. In private, Yugoslav officials assured their US contacts that Belgrade wanted no break in good formal ties, and the propaganda campaign did not affect the level of official contacts. No serious explanations for the anti-US line were offered, but in early February Tito himself stated that relations with the US remained good because Washington never made an issue over Yugoslav criticisms. We believe Tito's expression of confidence in the US tolerance of propaganda played a direct role in the sharp press attacks that ensued.

Belgrade has also trod on US toes in the foreign policy arena, intervening in the Security Council deliberations on Panama and on the Israeli raid on Beirut. In both cases, Belgrade clearly considered the opportunity to enhance its prestige in the nonaligned world too valuable to pass up. It may also have underestimated the reaction from Washington. The strong US diplomatic protests that resulted have shaken the belief, partially inspired by Tito, that the US can be crossed with impunity.

Tito's major speech to regime leaders on 23 April showed that the protests had a sobering effect. He only mentioned the US twice, both times praising its foreign policy toward the USSR and China, and he surprisingly made no mention at all of the US role in Southeast Asia. Other Yugoslav leaders are also concerned that the core of understanding between Belgrade and Washington has been dangerously eroded by the anti-US line.

As we see it, Yugoslav foreign policy is dominated by two concerns. The first is the need to strengthen national security, and the second is to improve Yugoslavia's international support in preparation for an eventual succession crisis. Belgrade will require a favorably disposed US in both circumstances, and will almost certainly strive to avoid any serious breach with Washington. At the same time, it will pursue good relations with Moscow in an attempt to offset the hostility of the past few years. Belgrade may not bend over backwards to refurbish its ties with the Soviets, but Tito does not want his heirs to face the succession period with Moscow ill-disposed toward them.

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We believe that Belgrade is fully aware of the dangers implicit in closer ties with Moscow. The judgments on what constitutes safe limits in relations with the Soviets are exceedingly complex, and will be more difficult to deal with after Tito dies. His successors will be less capable of commanding national obedience and will have problems in adjusting policy. Tito is thus trying simultaneously to reassert Yugoslav dedication to nonalignment and to revive the movement as a force capable of international action in defense of a founding member state. (The latter is of course something of a pipe dream.) Belgrade is also making it plain, by avoiding sharp criticism of the key Western European states, that their friendship could be another basic prop against any undue Soviet pressure.

Washington's traditional role of friend in periods of crisis is still a significant factor in Yugoslav strategic thinking. Over \$3 billion in various forms of aid have bailed Tito out of past troubles and, even more importantly, have given him a trump card in his dealing with Moscow. The current chill, if Tito mishandles it to the extent that this relationship is terminated, would shake domestic confidence in Belgrade's ability to stave off the Soviets and complicate the regime's efforts to achieve national unity.

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